

COMPUTERS/HILLEL SEGAL

Smart Notes gets its act together

If you like 3M's Post-it Notes, those small yellow slips of paper that stick to practically anything, then you'll love Version 2 of Smart Notes from Personics of Concord, Mass.

The \$79.95 program enables you to stick electronic notes to your computer screen, and even displays the notes in bright blue, red, violet, green or white if you have a color monitor.

The best part is that the notes can be attached to the screen of virtually any IBM PC or PC-compatible business program. You can add notes to word processing documents, accounting documents, spreadsheets or data base records. You can even put notes on your computer's directory so obscure file names can be more easily recognized.

The original version of the program was released a year ago but,

nutty as it seemed, the authors did not include a way for the notes to appear automatically. You had to press "Pg Dn" or other specified keys to retrieve them. A lot of buyers were disappointed.

Happily, the newly released Version 2 corrects the problem. You can even set a timer that tells the program how often to check the screen for notes. Using a very frequent setting, the computer will constantly be checking, and this will slow down other operations. But using the default setting, I found that the notes usually appeared within a second or so, and processing speed was not adversely affected.

Setting up notes is a breeze. After the program is installed on your computer, all you do is:

✓ Press the Control and F6 keys simultaneously. This activates Smart Notes and a menu of

choices appears at the bottom of your screen. F1 brings you the help screen. F2 is for making a note.

✓ After pressing the F2 function key, you then use the cursor movement keys — up, down, right and left arrows — to move the cursor to the desired location of the note.

✓ You then simply type the note.

✓ Finally, you can select one of three sizes for the note — a single line without a border, or a small- or medium-size colored box.

✓ By touching the "Esc" key you can exit the note-generating program and continue with your application. The note is saved automatically.

Two nice features of Smart Notes are the ability to easily edit existing notes, and change the criteria that the program uses to attach particular notes.

Normally, after a note appears on your screen, it disappears when you touch any key. At any time, you can call back the note by

touching the Control and F6 keys. Then, by moving the cursor to the note, an Edit Menu appears at the bottom of your screen. The text, position, size or color of the note can be changed in a jiffy.

The program uses what it calls the "context" to determine when a note appears. This is usually just a few words in the text. When it scans the screen and sees those words, the note pops up.

The bottom line: Version 2 of Smart Notes corrects all the drawbacks of the original version, and provides all the same benefits on your computer screen that the yellow, sticky Post-it Notes provide on paper. You'll love it, and so will your secretary or others that review your computer files.

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